

# The Irgun: Bombing of the King David Hotel

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(July 22, 1946)

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The [King David Hotel](#) was the site of the British military command and the British Criminal Investigation Division. The [Irgun](#) chose it as a target after British troops invaded the Jewish Agency June 29, 1946, and confiscated large quantities of documents. At about the same time, more than 2,500 Jews from all over Palestine were placed under arrest. The information about Jewish Agency operations, including intelligence activities in Arab countries, was taken to the King David Hotel.

A week later, news of a massacre of 40 Jews in a pogrom in [Poland](#) reminded the Jews of Palestine how Britain's restrictive immigration policy had condemned thousands to death.

[Irgun](#) leader [Menachem Begin](#) stressed his desire to avoid civilian casualties and said three telephone calls were placed, one to the hotel, another to the French Consulate, and a third to the Palestine Post, warning that explosives in the King David Hotel would soon be detonated.

On July 22, 1946, the calls were made. The call into the hotel was apparently received and ignored. Begin quotes one British official who supposedly refused to evacuate the building, saying: "We don't take orders from the Jews."<sup>1</sup> As a result, when the bombs exploded, the casualty toll was high: a total of 91 killed and 45 injured. Among the casualties were 15 Jews. Few people



in the hotel proper were injured by the blast.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to Arab attacks against Jews, which were widely hailed as heroic actions, the Jewish National Council denounced the bombing of the King David.<sup>3</sup>

For decades the British denied they had been warned. In 1979, however, a member of the British Parliament introduced evidence that the Irgun had indeed issued the warning. He offered the testimony of a British officer who heard other officers in the King David Hotel bar joking about a [Zionist](#) threat to the headquarters. The officer who overheard the conversation immediately left the hotel and survived.<sup>4</sup>

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**Sources:** [Israeli Government National Photo Collection](#)

1. Menachem Begin, [The Revolt](#), (NY: Nash Publishing, 1977), p. 224.
  2. J. Bowyer Bell, [Terror Out Of Zion](#), (NY: St. Martin's Press), p. 172.
  3. Anne Sinai and I. Robert Sinai, *Israel and the Arabs: Prelude to the Jewish State*, (NY: Facts on File, 1972), p. 83.
  4. Benjamin Netanyahu, ed., "International Terrorism: Challenge And Response," *Proceedings of the Jerusalem Conference on International Terrorism*, July 25, 1979, (Jerusalem: The Jonathan Institute, 1980), p. 45.
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